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The Washington Historical Quarterly

WASHINGTON NOMENCLATURE.

A Study.

The geographical names in the United States are derived from two great sources: Indian and European. Among the first explorers and settlers the former dominated; with the second generation of colonists the European names began to dominate. These early colonists looked to their European homes and personages for Plymouth, Boston, Albemarle, St. Mary's, Ft. Christina, New Rochelle, New Orleans, St. Louis, Santa Fe; or else from their own languages derived names indicative of local conditions or feelings: Providence, Philadelphia. When these settlements themselves began to send off scions to the upper waters of the Atlantic streams or into the transallegheny country, new names were taken from a variety of sources; from the old European places and personages, from Greece, Rome, or from classical compositions, e. g. Louisville, Athens, Rome, Oxford, Gallipolis. The Indian names were taken from the local Indian designations, and today stand as monuments to the natives' haunts and homes and as milestones to their westward movement before the coming white man. As the white man came his names told of the fond recollections of his distant home; but as he penetrated the wilderness and the mountains, these recollections dim and finally fade, to be replaced from the new native home in the old Atlantic colonies. Yet the names scattered from the Alleghenies to the Pacific by the constant stream of colonizing immigrants tell of the nomenclatural geneology; the Swede, Italian and German, the Russian, Dutch and Pole, even in our own days repeat the christening of the cavalier and Puritan.

The great bulk of the earlier and elemental names of the United States is derived, aside from the Indian, from those Euro-

pean natives first settling on the Atlantic coast: England, Spain, France, Holland and Sweden. The distribution of these names, according to nationalities, varies with different parts of the country. The New England states lead in number with six, mixing with the Indian the names from Holland, Sweden, England, France, and the later America; the south Atlantic states and the Pacific Northwest both have five: Indian, English, American, Spanish and French. The central states find four in the Indian, English, American and French. Like the Indians, in their westward and reservation movement, most of the European names in turn have been superceded by the newer American, and the scattered immigrant.

In the Pacific Northwest—composed for historical purposes of Oregon, Washington and Idaho—Washington is the most representative of them all. She has practically as many Indian and American names, and more English, Spanish and French names than either of the other two states. Oregon has a few Spanish names; Idaho has none; both Oregon and Idaho have a few French terms. Owing to the presence and activity of the Hudson's Bay Company, Washington has more designations of English and Indian sources due to the Englishmen than either of the other states. Indian names are well scattered through them all; while both Indian and American, in their proportion in the three states, depend upon the demand for names by the increasing population.

Washington is still a coast and river state. Excepting the broad plains about the head of the Cowlitz, Chehalis and Puyallup rivers, and about the Palouse and Spokane, the pioneer has as yet but scattered settlements in the interior. On the Sound and Grays Harbor, on the Columbia and its numberless branches Washington's population still resides. It must be noted, however, that the railway, penetrating the territory inaccessible by steamers, has expanded the settled lands, especially east of the mountains, and widened the country about the few centers heretofore drained by the trails and packroads. It is along the shores and river banks that the elemental nomenclature of Washington must be studied; on the trail and the railroad the settler is planting new American and immigrant names, or those derived from the aborigines.

The Indian, in naming rivers or parts of rivers, mountains, falls, villages and burial places, has scattered his names for the white man fairly regularly on both sides of the Cascades, yet

with an evident majority on the side of the west. Today¹ the east has 124 Indian names, the west 175; the former being 11 per cent. of the whole list of names from all sources, the latter 13 per cent. In 1891² the number was somewhat less: 111 east and 116 west of the Cascades, with a result that of the sum total of names from all sources the east had 23 per cent. and the west but 19 per cent. The difference in these two readings seems to be due to two reasons. The Century Atlas of 1891 is no doubt incomplete, even though it is a representative map of the state and as accurate as any accessible map of that date. Again, in the settlement of new locations in the last decade and a half, the Indian names are frequently retained.

It is interesting to note the peculiar way in which the names of the passing race have been retained by the white man. The Lower Sound counties—composed of the Sound-bordering counties northward to Snohomish and Island inclusive, and those counties on the Strait—have a majority of 96—23 more than the nearest competitive section. Here is where the white man first made his home and first met the Indian as the possessor of the soil: Here is Tumwater, Nisqually, Alki Point, Seattle, Steilacoom, Puyallup, Chehalis; the Cowlitz, the Snohomish, the Skokomish, the Dwamish, the Skukum Chuck. In this same section the Indian played his principal part west of the mountains, and defined the historical geography of the Indian wars of the fifties. This but reiterates the truth, true the country over, that the Indian—in names—had his greatest influence, where he had influence at all, either in the first decade of the pioneering or, which is rather evident in the Western states, in the period stretching from the settlement to the first boom. As second stands the district composed of those counties between the Columbia river and the Cascades. The Yakima valley, the rivers entering the Columbia from the mountains and those flowing from their sources in British Columbia, give the great majority of these names. As third stand the southwest counties—those bordering on the Pacific and the Columbia west of the Cascades; as fourth, the Upper Sound—composed of Skagit, Whatcom and San Juan counties; as fifth, the counties between the Columbia, the Snake and the Idaho line. As last, with 20, the southeastern counties between the Snake, and the Idaho and Oregon lines.³

¹ Rand-McNally, Map of Washington, 1905. The figures are given in round numbers.

² Century Atlas, 1891.

³ The Lower Sound, 96; the Cascade-Columbia, 73; the southwest, 44; the Upper Sound, 35; the eastern, 31; the southeast, 20.

In the distribution of the English-American names, the Lower Sound again vastly dominates; then the eastern, centering around Spokane and the Palouse country. Then the territory in the Yakima valley and along the right bank of the Columbia; followed by the southwest. The Upper Sound has almost twice as many as the counties in the opposite corner of the state:¹

No Spanish name is found east of the mountains. All but one of the fifteen Spanish names in the state are found in the Upper Sound country; and the single exception in the Lower Sound. With the French names it stands differently, in that of the 24 found on the map of 1905, 22 are east of the mountains and the other two in the Lower Sound territory. East of the Cascades 11 are located in the eastern division; 10 in the Columbia-Cascade lands, especially in the Okanogan country, and one in the southeast. There seems to be no Russian reliques of nomenclature in the state. The early attempt of 1806 to settle on the Columbia was defeated by the breakers on the bar at the mouth of the river; the successful settlement on Bodega Bay was too far south to effect the Pacific Northwest in other way than through the Monroe Doctrine; and the fur traders' activity in its southern course was stayed by the treaties with America and England in 1824 and 1825, wherein a limitation was placed at 54° 40'.

The manner and the periods in which these names came into existence varies with the peoples giving them origin. The Indian, as the original inhabitant, gave to favorite places many names which the explorer, the trader and the settler retained. Among the whites the names find their origin in three great sources: The explorer, the trader and the settler. Galiano and Valdez, Meares and Vancouver, Lewis and Clark, Gray and Wilkes left the earliest and most abiding names along the Straits, in the Upper and Lower Sounds, along the Coast and the Columbia. The fur trader of the old Northwest Company and the Hudson's Bay Company either gave new names or gave permanence to the native designations. Especially is their activity seen between the Sound and the Columbia, and along the latter, naming the posts, factories, rivers and lakes. Their names follow the hunters' and trappers' trails, radiating in all directions and connecting with the central factory on the shores of Hudson's Bay. In the service of the Hudson's Bay Company were the French-Can-

¹ The Lower Sound, 631; the eastern, 443; the Columbia-Cascade, 359; the southwest, 297; the Upper Sound, 215; the southeast, 110.

dians, who, as voyageurs, mingled freely with the Indians. He blended his own tongue with the Chinook about the lower banks of the Columbia, and left his name at The Dalles, on the Sans Poil river, with the Coeur d'Alene Indians, and their spelling in the Wallamette and the Coudenais. The settler succeeded the trapper and trader; he continued and increased the list of names of the Indian, explorer and hunter, and with his natural increase in population and expansion our territory has found demand for new names. These he has supplied by drawing upon his memory of his old home, his own experiences, or his impressions of local features.

It may seem that the missionary has been unjustly omitted. The missionary, in Washington as well as in the whole Pacific Northwest, has been so closely bound up with his activity as settler that in the question of nomenclature he loses his identity in the latter. Where he located at Wailaptu, Chimikane and Nisqually he accepts the names of the natives or of his forerunners, the Hudson's Bay Company men. Scarcely has he turned the soil as settler, and as missionary taught the natives to repeat the Lord's Prayer, than he is driven from his cabin-home by Indian outbreaks or is discouraged by Indian indifference; ere he returns to resume his work the settler, per se, is on his trail. The missionary then becomes the pastor of the settlers' church, the "sky-pilot" of the ranges, or the missionary-chaplain on the reservations. The age of transition through the missionary from the trader to the settler is short, indeed; and shorter on the Sound than east of the mountains.

I.

Indian Names. The native names as they are now found in the state came into origin by either of two ways. Where the Indian had names for definite places, mountains, rivers, etc., the white man, in the person of the early settler and trader, was content to retain the native terminology.¹ But the white man was not content with the localization of the Indian; his culture demanded more generic terms, names for whole river courses rather than parts, whole bodies of waters rather than villages on their shores, for new towns and sections rather than the tribal village and range. To supply these needs he frequently drew from the tribes

¹ Whatcom Creek and Lake; Puyallup, Walla Walla; Cowlitz, Palouse; Spokane, Okanogan; and Nooksack, rivers; Orcas Island.

near at hand or applied a name according to his own usage. In this way the early explorers named Tatouche and Neah bay; the early trader and the Hudson's Bay Company designated Ft. Okanogan and Spokane House in the north; Ft. Walla Walla; the Cowlitz Farm, not far distant from Ft. Nisqually. Where the traders in the forties ended their work, the early settlers began in the fifties. The towns of Chehalis, Seattle, Whatcom, Tacoma, Walla Walla arose; counties were christened Snohomish, Spokane, Skagit, Kitsap, Wakiakum; and a section named The Palouse. The missionary, in his zeal for the Indian, did not disturb the native ear with foreign names, but baptized his missions Wailaptu and Chimikane. These four—the explorer, the trader, the settler and the missionary—have given new meaning to the native terms. The Indians' rivers, mountains, and a few villages, have been supplemented by the white man's cities, counties and sections.

English Names. Captain Cook, two years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, christened the first English name found within the State of Washington. Cape Flattery, the name he used to designate that hazy and indistinct point of land where he thought he had found the Fucan Straits, as the first born of English names, has become permanent. Meares left Cape Shoalwater, Shoalwater Bay, Cape Disappointment, Mt. Olympus, etc. But the early explorer, Vancouver, was the most prolific of names. He made use of ten of the designations of his predecessors; he retained the "Columbia" as the American term for the Oregon. Five Indian and three Spanish names find places within his volumes; but when he entered the Straits and coasted the shores of his "Gulph of Georgia," which so often reminded him of his English home, he lavished sixty-eight names upon its waters, points, bays and mountains. Baker and Rainier, near Hood's Canal, and Bellingham Bay, stand as monuments over Vashon Island and Gray's Harbor. After these explorers the Hudson's Bay Company and its men scattered a few English names among their greater number of Indian origin. Vancouver, on the Columbia, seems to be the only name within the present State of Washington that is left of that long list stretching from Ft. George on the Pacific to Ft. Nelson on Hudson's Bay; and Franchere's name, the Great Basin of the Columbia, too, has passed away.

American Names. Gray, in the year of the inauguration of Washington, was the first American on the Northwest coast, as

In the vaults of the secretary of state are to be found the journals of territorial house and council, the journals of state house and senate, the constitution, the laws and the like, but with them is a great mass of other papers and records that has accumulated for years and that contains, no doubt, some important and valuable matter.

The other offices are in the same condition. When all moved into the new state house they gathered together what they could find and brought it, though none of it was systematically arranged, catalogued or indexed, save the current records. When the old territorial capitol on the hill was abandoned, papers galore were found in the attic and elsewhere and at least some of them were brought along. Some one found two old barrels full of strange looking papers. These, after strenuous experiences, landed in the office of the adjutant general. That gentleman—General Drain—took the trouble to examine them and found they were part of the Indian war records; original orders, reports and the like. The general turned them over to the state librarian in whose custody they are now, but no provision has yet been made for indexing them.

This chaotic condition of the state's archives is in no way the fault of the present officers. The same condition—and with less excuse—has been found to exist in many other states. It is the result of years of neglect by earlier officers, inadequate filing room, frequent changes of office location and lack of systematic attention to the important work of record preservation. There is evidence, too, that the archives have been ravaged by individuals for their personal collections. An incoming officer in the state administration finds in his limited filing accommodations these old accumulations. No matter how good his intentions he finds it impossible to do anything with them, for he soon learns that the current business of his office, with the growth of the state, is constantly increasing and that he has all he can do, with the small force that characterizes every state office at Olympia, to keep up with his current work without seeking to rearrange the old files. Further, it takes but a slight investigation on his part to learn that absolutely nothing of consequence can be done to bring order out of the chaotic condition without the services of a person skilled in indexing, cataloguing and the handling of archives. Hence the officer lets things stand as he finds them.

To digress for a moment, this condition is not peculiar to the State of Washington. The State of Wisconsin, notable for its splendid historical society and for its generous appropriations for historical research, only in recent years began to put its

the settler has this taken place. English-American Mount Baker has succeeded Kulshan; Rainier, Tacoma; Bellingham, Whatcom; and Columbia has usurped both the Oregon of Carver and the Tacoutche Tessé of the Washington-Oregon tribes. Even the English-American form of Indian names has taken the place of the original: Tahoma is now Tacoma; 'Isqually became Nisqually; Chi 'Keeles, Chehalis; and Wainape and Pischous are but slightly recognizable in Wenatchee. But, on the other hand, Orcas has persisted over Hull; Lewis has gone before the Shoshone, or rather its translation, the Snake; and the local pride of Tacoma encourages the passing of Rainier for the original name. English names have also been at war with the Spanish, and in some instances have been victorious. Bellingham Bay has overcome Sino del Gaston; Mount Baker, Montana del Carmel; Vancouver, Quadra and Vancouver's Island. The Americans have been busy with the English names. Oregon has succeeded New Georgia; Commencement Bay took the place of Puget Sound when it was raised by the Americans to the place occupied by the English Gulphe of Georgia. On the other hand, the Americans failed to make Bulfinch permanent on Gray's Harbor.

III.

Spelling, and in some instances pronunciation, have undergone changes, often quite a struggle, before the present forms were adopted. The dropping of the "'s" as possessives is quite evident in the middle of the century, excepting where it has been retained for the sake of euphony. One now reads and hears Puget Sound; yet on the other hand, Gray's Harbor. Spokane of today was written Spokan by Simpson, Greenhow and Franchere, and Spokein by Parker. The present Palouse Wilkes wrote Peluse, and Simpson, Paaylops. Walla Walla was written Wallawalla by Franchere, Simpson and Wilkes; Wallahwallah by Bonneville; and Walla Walla by Greenhow. Okanogan Greenhow finds to be Okinagan; Simpson and Nicolet, Okanagan; and Ross, Oakinacken. The Cowlitz is read Cowalitz by Parker, Cowelitz by Ross and Greenhow, and by Franchere both Cowlitzk and Cowlikt. Nisqually became with Greenhow Nasqually; 'Squally—but Ft. Nisqually—with Simpson; and Nosqually with Ross. Chehalis is written Checayles by Simpson, Chekelis by Greenhow; Chickeeles by Wilkes, and Tschikeyles by Franchere.

Among the Spanish names Haro is sometimes written Aro; and Comaño no longer bears its native marking.

In pronunciation some of the changes follow the spelling. In the case of Chehalis, with its peculiar guttural "Chi," it has been simplified in both. 'Squally was changed in speech by the Hudson's Bay Company. Sealth in the white man's mouth became Seattle, and Tahoma became Tacoma. The old Spanish names of Lopez, Comaño, Rosario, have all been Americanized in speech. The greatest change, perhaps, is in the name of the united names of Whatcom and Fairhaven; Bellingham in England drops the "h," shortens the "a" and accents the ante-penult, while in the English town of Bellingham and the old family of that name it becomes Bellingjem, accented in the usual English way.

IV.

Some names have taken on a new meaning, either increasing or decreasing their range. Bellingham Bay was enlarged to include the older Spanish Sino del Gaston; Puget Sound, since the forties, designates the whole Sound. The Gulphe of Georgia, as defined by Vancouver, has become the small body of water north of the San Juan Islands. Upper and Lower Sound have changed places so that they now follow the cardinal points of north and south as located on the map. The old Northwest has become the Pacific Northwest, and this shrinks gradually in meaning to the State of Washington and then to Whatcom county. Old Oregon became the state of that name. East and west of the mountains are now fixed terms, synonymous in part with the Sound country and the Inland Empire.

It is to be hoped that in the future numbers of this magazine an extensive study of this subject may be made, and these few observations from a few of the sources may be corroborated or corrected.

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